

SONGS Community Engagement Panel Meeting
Spent Fuel Transportation and SONGS Decommissioning Updates
26 October 2023

Key Takeaways

A virtual meeting of the Community Engagement Panel included updates on the development of railcars to support the future transportation of spent nuclear from sites like SONGS, the latest work of the Spent Fuel Solutions coalition, and the status of decommissioning.

The Department of Energy is well along in planning for spent fuel transportation, largely by rail but also by road and barge as needed. Special railcars are designed to reduce the risk of derailment and DOE is working on two models to carry different sized loads—a larger Atlas and smaller Fortis railcar. Atlas railcar testing is complete, with approval by the Association of American Railroads anticipated in the next few months, ahead of the DOE's timeframe for providing offsite storage of spent fuel. Also underway is work on an integrated rail security and safety monitoring system to help detect equipment malfunctions before failure.

Railcars will carry spent fuel canisters and packages designed to assure the containment of all contents in severe accident conditions including a drop, fire, and immersion in water.

Spent Fuel Solutions coalition co-chairs/CEP members/Supervisors Katrina Foley of Orange County and Jim Desmond of San Diego County provided updates on important work to advocate for offsite storage and disposal of spent fuel. SFS is executing a strategy to amend the Nuclear Waste Policy Act in ways that would provide for a more durable and integrated spent fuel management program that includes both near-term storage and permanent disposal. Educational webinars are available for those interested in learning more about solutions for offsite storage and disposal of spent fuel, and recordings are online.

The decommissioning general contractor for SONGS is 63 percent finished with the current phase of dismantlement, with full completion expected by the end of 2028.

The meeting was the first with Dan Stetson as CEP Chair and San Clemente City Councilmember Victor Cabral as Vice Chair. It was the last for SCE's Doug Bauder, who is retiring, and the first for Fred Bailly who succeeds Doug as Vice President and Chief Nuclear Officer.

The meeting was well attended with robust discussion. During public comment, Katie Day of Surfrider Foundation stated in part that ocean water samples recently collected before, during, and after a discharge of cleaned up wastewater from SONGS were found to have levels of Cesium-134 and -137 that are "considered very low, even well below EPA drinking water limits."

Shareables

- Watch an SFS webinar on the evolving narrative on the US spent fuel management program.
- Register to watch the Nov. 2 DOE webinar on consortia working on consent-based siting.
- Register for a tour of SONGS, stay up to date on the CEP, and book a speaker for a civic group meeting using the SONGS community engagement page.